

Become A Special Educator in Tennessee

Feature Story

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Enrolled in Online Speech-Language Pathology Program



As a graduate student at Tennessee State University (TSU), my goal is to become a Speech-Language Pathologist who serves students with disabilities. I currently hold a Bachelor's degree in Education from the University of Tennessee at Martin and a Master's degree in Administration and Supervision from Murray State University.

My employer is a rural school system, and – like many other school systems in Tennessee – it has been unable to attract certified Speech-Language Pathologists. A cooperative search was made by the Supervisor of Teachers and the Director of Schools to identify program options that would allow me to pursue Master's level certification in Speech-Language Pathology while remaining a fifth-grade teacher. The search lead to the Online Speech-Language Pilot Program offered by Tennessee State University. I was selected to become a member of the first cohort enrolled in a year of prerequisite courses. All students in the cohort were licensed teachers with a degree in education. During that first year in the Online Speech-Language Program, the basics and fundamental aspects of speech and language were taught. Thereafter, the cohort enrolled in the first year of graduate school, and it was wonderful!

Initially, I was apprehensive about returning to school due to family and work responsibilities. However, with careful planning and some sacrifices, I have been able to effectively accomplish both goals.

Currently, I am employed as a Speech Therapist in a rural school district in Tennessee, with ongoing mentoring provided by a fully licensed Speech-Language Pathologist. I serve approximately 70 children who have special needs in speech and language.

Financial support for my enrollment in the TSU Online Program has been provided by the BASE-TN (Become A Special Educator in TN) Initiative, a program sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Special Education, that provides financial support for eligible candidates who seek to earn a special education teacher license and serve in a Tennessee school two years for each year of BASE-TN support received. This Initiative is designed to help Tennessee address the shortage of properly licensed special educators who serve students with disabilities.

For more information about the BASE-TN Initiative,
visit www.k12.tn.us/BASE-TN
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